

## Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 HA-05 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-08 INR-10  
LAB-04 NSAE-00 SIL-01 ACDA-12 MCT-01 PM-05 H-01  
L-03 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11 OPR-02 A-01  
AID-05 PC-01 SY-05 /113 W  
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R 312230Z MAR 78  
FM AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0000  
INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA  
AMEMBASSY MANAGUA  
AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE  
AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA  
USCINCSO  
DIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAN SALVADOR 1542

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PINT, PINS, SHUM, ES  
SUBJECT: MARCH 17 DEMONSTRATION FOLLOW-UP REPORT

REFS: (A) SAN SALVADOR 1336, (B) SAN SALVADOR 1323

(C) AMBASSADOR-SCHNEIDER TELCON MARCH 22

1. MARCH 17 CONFRONTATION BETWEEN BPR, FECCAS AND UTC DEMONSTRATORS AND GOES ECURITY FORCES (SEE REFTELS A AND B) HAS BEEN SOMEWHAT OVER-SHADOWED BY MUCH LARGER AND MORE SERIOUS RURAL CONFRONTATION IN SAN PEDRO PERUPAPAN (SEE SAN SALVADOR 1496) AND PREVIOUS).

2. EMBOFFS HAVE MADE CONCERTED EFFORT TO ASCERTAIN WHO IN FACT BASICALLY RESPONSIBLE FOR MACH 17 INCIDENT AND ITS CONSEQUENCES. HIGH-LEVEL GOES OFFICIALS, BOTH MILITARY AND CIVILIAN (INCLUDING PRESIDENT OF SUPREME COURT ROGELIO CHAVEZ) STEADFASLY MAINTAIN CONFIDENTIAL

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THAT NATIONAL POLICE WENT TO SITE OF GROWING GROUP OF DEMONSTRATORS AND HAD A SENIOR POLICE OFFICER ATTEMPT TO PERSUADE GROUP TO DISPERSE SINCE THEY WERE IN VIOLATION OF LAW FOR ATTEMPTING TO HOLD DEMONSTRATION WITHOUT REQUIRED PERMISSION UNDER LAW OF DEFENSE AND GUARANTEE OF PUBLIC ORDER. SOME WITNESSES STATED THAT DEMONSTRATORS RESPONDED THAT CONSTITUTION GUARANTEES RIGHT OF PUBLIC ASSEMBLY AND THEREFORE THEY WOULD CONTINUE

DEMONSTRATION. (CONSTITUTION IN FACT PERMITS RIGHT OF "PEACEFUL, UNARMED ASSEMBLY FOR WHATEVER LEGAL PURPOSE" AND THERE IS LITTLE DOUBT THAT SOME DEMONSTRATORS WERE ARMED AND CARRIED MOLOTOV COCKTAILS AS WELL.) GOES VERSION, HOWEVER, IS THAT FIRST SHOTS WERE FIRED FROM PARKED CAR WHICH THEN FLED FROM SCENE, SERIOUSLY WOUNDING POLICE OFFICER ATTEMPTING TO GET CROWD TO DISPERSE (HE WAS SHOT SIX TIMES, THREE INFLECTING INJURIES AND THREE IN BULLET-PROOF VEST). GOES OFFICIALS ADD THAT UNREASONABLE TO ASSUME POLICE WOULD OPEN FIRE WHILE SENIOR OFFICE IN COMPLETELY EXPOSED AND IN VULNERABLE POSITION POLICE THEN RETURNED FIRE, WITH CASUALTIES ON BOTH SIDES.

3. RED CROSS OFFICIALS (INCIDENT BEGAN IN FRONT OF RED CROSS CENTER) STATED TO EMBOFFS MARCH 29 THAT THEY HAD NO EYEWITNESSES TO OPENING OF SHOOTING, BUT DID CONFIRM THAT MAJOR CANIZALES DID ATTEMPT TO PERSUADE CROWD TO DISPERSE PRIOR TO EXCHANGE OF GUNFIRE. ONE OFFICE EXPRESSED HIS PERSONAL OPINION THAT POLICE RESPONSE MAY HAVE BEEN GREATER THAN THREAT POSED BY DEMONSTRATORS.

4. DR. GULLLERMO UNGO, SECRETARY-GENERAL OF LEFTIST OPPOSITION POLITICAL PARTY, NATIONAL REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT (MNR), TOLD EMBOFFS MARCH 21 THAT INCIDENT TOOK PLACE VERY NEAR A SMALL PRINTING SHOP HE OWNS IN SAN SALVADOR. UNGO SAID HE HAD NOT BEEN PRESENT BUT THAT MARIO PACHECO, PDC CANDIDATE FOR VICE-PRESIDENT IN THE 1967 ELECTIONS, WAS THERE IN THE SHOP AND HAD CONFIDENTIAL

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BEEN WOUNDED AS A RESULT. UNGO THEN SHOWED A COUPLE OF BULLET SLUGS THAT HAD BEEN FIRED INTO THE SHOP. UNGO STATED THAT HE DID NOT KNOW WHAT STARTED THE SHOOTING BUT HAD ASSUMED IT WAS DUE TO THE POLICE SAYING THAT THE BPR, WHICH DID NOT HAVE A PERMIT TO DEMONSTRATE, COULD NOT GO THROUGH WITH ITS PLANNED DEMONSTRATION AND THE BPR'S INSISTING IT COULD. IN SUCH A SITUATION, UNGO SAID THE BPR MAY WELL HAVE FIRED THE FIRST SHOTS.

5. JOSE RODOLFO VIERA, SECRETARY-GENERAL OF UNION COMUNAL SALVADORENA (UCS), TOLD EMBOFFS MARCH 28 THAT HARD-CORE LEADERSHIP OF BPR, FECCAS AND UTC ARE INVARIABLE ARMED AT MEETINGS AND PUBLIC DEMONSTRATIONS AND WELCOME OPPORTUNITIES TO CREATE MARTYRS AND GAIN PUBLICITY FOR THEIR ORGANIZATIONS. (VIERRA CANNOT BE CONSIDERED UNBIASED SINCE UCS AND UTC-FECCAS ARE IN CONSTANT, THOUGH NON-VIOLENT, COMPETITION FOR CAMPESINO SUPPORT OF THEIR RESPECTIVE GROUPS.)

6. CATHOLIC CHURCH LEADERS HAVE ISSUED STATEMENTS DEPLORING INCIDENT AND WHILE GENERALLY INDICATING THEY FEEL POLICE FIRED FIRST, MAINTAIN THAT MORE IMPORTANT FACTORS ARE BASIC RIGHT OF CITIZENS TO HOLD DEMONSTRATIONS AND OVER-REACTION ON PART OF NATIONAL

POLICE.

7. COMMENT. WHILE WE STILL WIND UP WITH CERTAIN CONFLICTS AS TO WHO FIRST AND WHETHER POLICE SHOULD HAVE ATTEMPTED TO BREAK UP DEMONSTRATION AT ALL, IT DOES APPEAR THAT POLICE DID MAKE INITIAL EFFORT TO DISPERSE CROWD PEACEFULLY AND DID HAVE CONSTITUTIONAL BASIS (ARMS) FOR HALTING DEMONSTRATION. IT DOES APPEAR, HOWEVER, THAT ONCE BEGUN, POLICE OVER-REACTED TO THREAT.

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## Message Attributes

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